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V. EARNING A LIVING

Intertribal Trade

439 There is little trade between the Ngoni and the neighbouring tribes, whose products are largely the same as their own. Fish is brought up from the Luangwa valley by Kunda and some of it is sold to the Ngoni of the Cipalamba, through whose villages the hawkers pass on their way to Fort Jameson. Bracelets are sometimes brought from Portuguese East Africa by Chikunda. The main attraction for these hawkers is Fort Jameson itself, and it is the fact that the town is encircled by the Ngoni that gives rise to trading with them. The geographical location of the town has also led to the growth in Ngoni [366] country of many stores and what are known in the vernacular as hotels, where tea and buns can be bought and where sometimes there is shelter for the night.

Of greater importance in the life of the tribe than these intertribal links are those arising from White and Indian economic activities. We may distinguish three zones of interaction, the shops both in Fort Jameson township and scattered throughout the district owned by Whites and Indians, the local tobacco farms, and the mines of Southern Rhodesia. The Ngoni have come to need cloth for clothes which they cannot produce themselves, and it is doubtful if there would be enough animals to provide skins for the tribe even if they did not insist on cloth. The need to earn money with which to buy clothes, soap, and other necessities can be met only by seeking employment on a farm, in Fort Jameson township, or farther off. A few people earn enough by selling vegetables in Fort Jameson, and there is a certain amount of maize and other cereals sold. These sales, however, do not provide sufficient income to reduce materially the extent to which people go out to work.

Control of Movement

101 To the White traveller, Fort Jameson District is an island of tobacco in a sea of bush. To the Ngoni, the island is not so sharply demarcated, and its characteristic property is cattle, not tobacco, yet it still remains an island, surrounded by a sea of other tribes whose 101 traditions are different from their own. The ships that cross this sea 489 are the lorries. In time past, men used to walk to their destinations, [493] going by Feira to Southern Rhodesia, or across the Luangwa to Broken Hill. A few used to go down to Lake Nyasa, and thence to the

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Lupa goldfields and Dar-es-Salaam. Nowadays almost everyone goes by lorry, but now as then a man has to go a long way before he can arrive at an island of friends in one of the urban centres. This means that, for the Ngoni, emigration is a definite event, and does not occur as a result of a gradual drifting farther and farther away from the tribal area. Lorries run from Fort Jameson to Lusaka and to Lilongwe, and from Missale to Mtoko in Southern Rhodesia. There is also a lorry service from Lundazi to Fort Jameson, but this does not lead anywhere else, and is not used by Mpezeni's people except locally. Lusaka is on a railway line, Lilongwe is connected by bus and train to Blantyre, while Mtoko is on the way to Salisbury. It is these lorry routes which now provide the links with the outside world, and along which people and goods travel, the people in both directions, and the goods, apart from tobacco, mainly inwards. Use of these routes is controlled by the chiefs, the Administration, by economic factors, and by the weather. This last has been less important of late, and the roads are seldom impassable for more than a week at a time, however heavy the rains. In order to travel on the lorries from Fort Jameson a man must have a ticket, which costs £1 for the journey to Lusaka, and less for the trip to Lilongwe. The lorry service from Missale to Mtoko is free.

The Administration exercise control by insisting that no man shall leave the Territory of Northern Rhodesia unless he is in possession of an identification certificate endorsed by the Administration permitting him to do so. In practice, such endorsements are not usually made unless the man can produce written permission from the chief that he is free to go. This working arrangement is intended to ensure that men do not flee the country when there are cases pending against them, and to prevent unjustifiable desertion of wives and children. In fact men are sometimes given permission to go while cases in which they are involved are still unheard.

The emigration of women and children is further controlled in that there is a law[1] forbidding a woman to leave the tribal area except in the company of her husband, or with a pass to leave from the Native Authority. Sucking children are allowed to accompany their mothers, but other children under the age of sixteen are not allowed to leave the province without permission of the Native Authority,[2] while boys

[1] Ngoni Native Authority Order 24.

[2] Ngoni N. A. Order 39. The child must be either accompanied by its parents or else accompanied by a guardian on the way to join its parents.

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486 562 858 over sixteen are not allowed to leave without a pass from their Native Authority until they have paid tax for one year at home.[1] These laws are quite energetically enforced, principally by the placing of Native Authority police at strategic points along the lorry routes. These police inspect the passes of all passengers on the lorries, and bring offenders before the nearest Native Court.

486 562 The devices adopted to evade these restrictions are much as one might expect. The drivers of the lorries may be won over, particularly by women. A woman may get a lorry driver to say that she is his wife, or even enter into a temporary marriage with him, if she wishes to run away without a ticket. Some people walk to the far side of the police point and then attempt to get on the lorry after the search has been completed. A woman who has a ticket but no pass may pose as the wife of some unaccompanied male passenger.

484 167 The motives for leaving the area are many. Most of the men go to look for work, although a few go away to visit their urban relatives and friends for a holiday. Others go to buy goods that may be unobtainable locally for the time being, such as tools or window-panes, or which they think they can get more cheaply elsewhere, such as bicycles. Many of the women go to join their husbands, but some are fleeing from them, or have grown tired of living at home married to men who live permanently in Southern Rhodesia, and are out to try their luck in the towns.

489 Whereas the outgoing lorries are comparatively empty of goods, the returning passengers are well loaded with belongings. The fares are higher, and the Mtoko–Missale service is not free on the northward trip. One of the most important commodities brought in along these routes is the mail. Men working in Southern Rhodesia and elsewhere write home to keep their wives and brothers informed of their whereabouts, and send postal orders to enable their families to buy clothes.

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This movement to and from the outside world must be seen in its relationship to the opportunities that exist for employment within the District on the tobacco farms.

Farm Labour

464 249 [361] No village in either of the reserves occupied by the Ngoni is more than 12 miles from a farm. This means that it is possible for a man to work as a labourer on a farm and yet retain a large number of his contacts with his village and chief. In particular, his wife and children

[1] Ngoni N. A. Order 37.